

The Vital Force

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Justin Stone: In His Words

The Idea Of Impermanence

Spring 1988 © The Vital Force

On my recent visit to Albuquerque I gave a talk to over 200 people on the subject “The Spiritual Life” (in a busy world). Many points were similar to the “merging Sense with Essence” talk I made to teachers at the Minneapolis Conference. This subject seems to hit people hard, as they feel they must get away from family and work routine in order to practice Spirituality (accordance with the Real).

That is far from the truth. I related how a Zen priest in Japan had said to me: “Stone-san, be the Big hermit; anybody can be the small hermit.” I told them how I suddenly remembered this phrase while meditating with the Yogis in the cold Himalayan foothills, eating once a day, etc. I then thought: “I should be able to do this at 42nd and Broadway!” and left the mountain seclusion the next day. Though I didn’t yet know the meaning of “Seijaku” – stillness in the midst of activity – the idea had already begun acting in my consciousness.

“I should be able
to do this at 42nd
and Broadway.”

- Justin Stone



In my book, “Abandon Hope!”, I have a chapter about the “Growth of Certainty,” and once that has been experienced, it is not difficult to sense the Essence at all times, whatever the situation. This usually leads to a feeling of profound gratitude. As Paul Reps says: “How grateful I am with no thing to be grateful for.” Note he didn’t say “Nothing to be grateful for.”

Once we accept the idea of Impermanence, it’s not too difficult to experience who and what we are. This is so well expressed by the Lotus Sutra, which says: “From the State of Emptiness, Man’s body is a body filling the Universe, Man’s voice is a voice pervading the Universe, and Man’s life is a Life without Limit.”

At left and top: Practicing T'ai Chi Chih on the 100th anniversary of Justin Stone's birthday.

May The Vital Force Be With You

Remembering Justin

It's been about six months since we celebrated the 100-year anniversary of Justin's birth and less than two months since we noted the five-year mark of his death. His stories and personal interactions with him are never far from the surface; in fact, they exist more like *Chi* pressed into our bones.

Many, many interactions with him pop to mind. When I traveled back-and-forth between Boston and Albuquerque for a decade, I would spend the return flight to Boston writing down the revelations and riddles that my time with Justin prompted. Here are a few stories.

We'd been in our Albuquerque house for two years but Justin had never accepted an invitation to visit until he invited himself over – the morning my cat was to be 'put to sleep.' Justin made a beeline to my office, where the cat was curled up (although no one had told Justin anything), and he made one of the most compassionate comments that I'd ever heard him utter. Then he left. Later that afternoon when he opened the door for meditation at his house (which he never did, as we all just barged in), he said, "I'm glad you are here; you're in the right place."

Another time, I'd been doing T'ai Chi Chih with Justin and three others in his living room when he began really hammering home on some point about how I was moving. I became upset and refused to go out to dinner with them afterwards. When examining what had happened later that night, I said out

loud, "I don't trust that guy" and in that instant, an enormous and related issue was completely resolved. It "only" required Justin's expression of unconditionality.

Another time, I was having a difficult conversation in his living room with him and another person. Justin interrupted, got up and asked me, "Dear, would you like a soft." He was referring to a soft drink, but in that moment, he was telling me to let of the matter. My response? "No... thank you." He returned without a drink (for me or himself), to a softer situation and we exchanged a small smile.

There are a thousand more stories, all different but the same.



Photos & Conference 2017

The image at left and those featured on page 4, 5, 10, 11, and 17 were taken in and around Boulder and at the conference center, compliments of Lisa VV, as a way to entice you to attend the conference on June 15-18th.

~ WITH GRATITUDE, KIM GRANT,
ALBUQUERQUE, NM

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The Vital Force

~ Web Site Updates ~

The on-line database (for www.taichichih.org) will be updated within a week of the following deadlines: January 15, March 1, April 15, June 1, July 15, September 1, October 15, & December 1.

~ Submission Deadlines ~

January 1 for the February issue
April 1 for the May issue
July 1 for the August issue
October 1 for the November issue

~ Submission Guidelines ~

Please send articles as Word documents, electronically, to tcc@kimgrant.com. A 1/4 page in this newsletter runs about 200 words; a 1/2 page is 400 words. We are always in need of photos and artwork. Please send high resolution jpgs, which the Editor will crop and edit. If you have 10-12 pieces of related artwork – calligraphy, drawings, photographs, or something that will reproduce well in B/W – please submit them for consideration in an entire issue. The Vital Force reserves the right to edit submission for length and clarity.

~ Giving ~

Please consider a tax-deductible contribution to support The Vital Force's essential and vast outreach. Membership fees cover the journal; our other activities continue through the discretion and generous support of our giving base. They allow us to effectively reach hundreds of thousands of practitioners around the globe. Thanks to our supporters who:

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T'ai Chi Chih
Boulder 2017

**It's not too late to
register for the
Boulder Teacher
Conference –
the deadline is June 7!**

*Discounted conference rate rooms
available while supply lasts.*

We are very excited about the conference program this year. We are planning stimulating presentations and discussions, networking and socializing activities, relaxing, fun-filled evenings, and, of course, opportunities to practice, practice, practice. Our speakers and presentations are still being confirmed, but here's a taste of what is in store! Please stay tuned – when complete, the full program (including silent, morning practice sessions, vendor, meal, and break times) will be posted at: taichichih.org/conference-2017

THURSDAY

Today is all about arriving, getting oriented, and settling in. We think that you will be delighted with the physical environment and hospitality provided by the Millennium Harvest Hotel and the warm welcome you will receive from our energetic and dedicated conference committee, as well as from our Guide, Sandy McAlister, and our Conference Coordinator, Marie Dotts. In addition to **our first group practice** and meal together, we'll have some lighthearted **opportunities to meet new friends** and to and socialize with old friends and new.

FRIDAY

Today's focus is "Feel the Chi." This day is dedicated to our personal practice and growth, with activities to deepen your awareness of and relationship with the Chi.

Opening Presentation: The Science of Well-Being: The Brain on T'ai Chi Chih by Dr. David Parrish, who will provide a brief overview of current brain science that clearly indicates that mindfulness practices such as TCC change the mind and change the brain in significant ways in a relatively short time.

Dr. Parrish, who teaches TCC in New Jersey, will present scientific findings that indicate that well-being is a skill that can be practiced and cultivated, and will explain why TCC is an exceptional method to "practice well-being."

"What are you Feeling Now?" Four Perspectives on Grounding | We talk a lot about "grounding" in TCC. But what is it? Why is it important? How do we do it? How do we know if we have accomplished it? How do we know if our students are grounded (can we feel it)? Veteran teachers Dan Pienciak, Pam Towne, Carmen Brocklehurst, and Marie Dotts will share their experience and guidance in this on-your-feet session.

Movement Refinement by our Guide and Teacher Trainer, Sandy McAlister

Group Discussion: Giving and Receiving Correction: Aligning with Teh and the Continually Evolving Vital Force | In this facilitated conversation, we will explore how we can more fully embody openness and *teh* (integrity and inner sincerity) as our TCC practice deepens and evolves. As part of this discussion we will discuss the art and service of giving and receiving correction.

Feeling the Chi in your Own Practice | Teachers Caroline Guilott, Dora Weimann, and Amy Tyksinski will lead on-your-feet sessions with guidance focused on cultivating awareness of the flow of *Chi* in your personal practice.

Full Practice with Correction | In this full practice session, our Guide, Sandy McAlister, and our Teacher Trainers, Pam Towne and Dan Pienciak, will circulate and offer gentle correction.

TCC Storytelling and Talent Show | Co-Emcees: Neal Roy and April Leffler will host a heart-warming and fun-filled evening of personal storytelling and talent performances.

Chi Party!!! | Informal social time for those not ready for sleep.

SATURDAY

Today's focus is "Share the Chi." This day is dedicated to supporting your teaching and spreading the word of TCC.

Presentation: My Experiences Sharing the Chi by Jessica Lewis, who will share her experience as the sole TCC teacher in the tiny state of Delaware. Jessica, also a master personal trainer and nutrition counselor, will talk about creating a niche, generating free press, and generally stirring the pot as much as possible. Says Jessica: "The most important thing I've learned (so far) on my journey with TCC is that intention breeds creative energy and creative energy breeds action and *fun*."

More Movement Refinement by our Guide and Teacher Trainer, Sandy McAlister

Lunchtime Networking Discussion Groups for Teaching Specific Populations / Settings: (1) Children; (2) Teens & College students; (3) Prisoners; (4) Students with Alzheimer's & dementia; (5) Students with limited mobility; (6) How to present TCC in a corporate/government wellness program; (7) Setting a fair price for your classes; (8) Teaching Seijaku.

Small Group Discussion: The Physical and the Spiritual in T'ai Chi Chih | We'll break into small groups to share whether we came to TCC primarily for physical or spiritual reasons, and whether and how that focus has changed for us over the years. We'll also share how our personal experience of TCC as a physical and/or spiritual practice influences and guides our teaching and our relationship with Justin Stone's writings, and the way we share Justin's philosophical/spiritual writings with our students.

Breakout sessions: How to Introduce and Refine Basic Principles and Movements (choose two sessions to attend)

- Demystifying teaching the "Taffies"
- Introducing your TCC students to Seijaku
- Teaching alignment and the forward and back weight shift from the *tan t'ien*
- Side-to-side movements: the hip swivel & moving from the *tan t'ien*
- Discussion session: Teaching ongoing, drop-in classes
- Teaching seated TCC to all students regardless of whether they need to sit

Community practice: Local Students join us!

Saturday evening, we'll gather for our annual **Rededication Ceremony**, as well as our **Auction & Raffle**, our festive yearly event to raise scholarship funds for next year's conference.

SUNDAY

Today we'll share news of **projects and ongoing community initiatives**. After our **final practice**, we'll say good-bye till next year.



**We are looking forward to seeing
you in Boulder in June!**

Your 2017 Teacher Conference
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Practice

By Lisa Stroyan, Fort Collins, Colorado

I recently started a discussion on the Facebook T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Circle page about practicing. For the first time ever, I'm managing to practice daily. I'm loving the consistency – and the effects it has. Yet I still encounter avoidance and resistance each morning. When I confided this to my class, a sigh of relief went around the circle. “Yes,” one student said, “I tried putting it on my calendar, but then it just became another appointment and I started resenting it.”

It often seems like a task to come into myself and practice. Before I start, practice seems like something I do only because it's good for me, and because I told myself I would. It often starts out feeling awkward. Though my body creaks and aches, I subconsciously expect my movements to immediately feel easy; when they don't, there is subtle judgment of myself. Or, my mind is already caught up in the day. It flips through thoughts like cards in a deck: concern about a friend, caring for my aging father, homeschooling my son, eating healthy food, “fixing” my chronic illness, wanting to lose weight.

Then I start to connect with my feet. I settle into the smooth rhythm of the weight shift. I mentally let the cards fall as I flow to this internal beat. It doesn't always happen quickly, and some days I can't get out of my head enough to find that sense of flow. I remind myself that I don't have to feel the *Chi* to know that is working. I'll still come away refreshed and grounded compared to how I went in.

Once I'm immersed in the movements, though, time flies by. *Chi* begins to feel like water flowing around me. Sometimes I get caught up in it, splashing and playing, perhaps circling around and around, or feeling the hip swivel, a recent refinement. It brings a sense of balance to chaotic thinking, and energy to sluggishness. I come out of practice seeing the world differently than when I went in. Life feels easier; space and time, more abundant. The quality of the rest of my day is enhanced.

So why is it that tomorrow, I'll have to remind myself of all of these things again, while my mind tries to dart away to something more urgent?

I have a habit of categorizing my personal practice as one of those things I “should” do, and I resist shoulds. I start to see it as a to-do item and then it gets jumbled in with the rest of the ever-shuffling deck of cards. The word “practice” triggers my habits of perfectionism and needing to please, to do things “correctly.” I used to think of “practicing” as simply perfecting a skill. But the point of TCC isn't to get it all right and perfect and then let it sit there on the shelf. Practice is about doing, not perfecting.

Here are some of the tools that have helped me get into a daily routine, and some suggestions from fellow teachers on Facebook. Many of us **practice outside** if we can, or with one of Justin's DVDs when we need inspiration. **Getting ready mindfully** helps me, rather than just jumping in; I usually make tea, pick my spot, gather what I like to have nearby, and set up my music. **Studying Justin's writing** and other mindfulness resources can help keep practices fresh. **Sticking with a similar time of day** can help, too, such as immediately after getting up, before the mind is awake.

An important suggestion was **not to be self-critical**, not to beat ourselves up about practicing – just practice. Recently I've been motivated by **tracking my practice time** with a free app, Insight Timer. It helps me be more mindful about my intentions, deciding length and focus in advance. I enjoy the idea that I'm “practicing with” thousands of other meditators around the world. (I've created a TCC group there, if you'd like to practice “together” sometime.)

Also, I'm understanding the word “practice” differently. I am practicing not just TCC but being present, rather than anticipating the future. I am practicing letting go. Sometimes I have to consciously let go of each thought or worry, reminding myself patiently that I don't need to handle that now. Wouldn't it be a waste, I remind myself, to be in such a beautiful space and share it with all of that mental clutter? Why not be selfish, just for these few moments, and let everything else take care of itself? **It's not as easy as it sounds. And so I practice.** I practice being in this moment, and letting that be enough. I practice showing up even when I don't feel like I can. I am practicing life, using T'ai Chi Chih.



“once I'm
immersed in
the movements
time flies by

Compassion, When Me Becomes We

By Carmen L Brocklehurst, Albuquerque, New Mexico

So many students come to T'ai Chi Chih hoping for a change within. Most of us think at an entry level. Will I be able to run faster, jump higher or dance better? But the mere fact that we came to TCC instead of somewhere else is a wonderful beginning. As one participant at a Healing Cancer Retreat said, "I thought I was going to be doing something weird, but this is easy and good to do. I could hardly breathe when we started, but I am breathing better now; it feels great."

TCC rarely comes into our lives like a big brass band blaring. Like the movements, it comes softly because a friend wants to share it, or it comes slowly because our partner has been doing it for years and we have seen wonderful changes – perhaps they are more gentle, helpful, concerned or compassionate. One woman said she'd been peeking at her husband's TCC Textbook a long time before coming to class. It helps that TCC is not connected to any religious doctrine or philosophy.

The time comes in our practice when the "I" reason for doing TCC begins to change to "we."

As Hakuin Zenji said upon having his enlightenment experience, "After this, looking at the things of this world was like looking at the back of my own hand." We rarely think in terms of "us" unless we are talking about things that have to do with me and mine: my home, family, city, country. But many times a crisis or our TCC practice helps us go deeper. We begin opening and caring if someone has a bed to sleep in after a tornado, or that people in a village in Africa deserve clean water and shelter from the cold, or knowing that education for all is a wonderful step forward for mankind.

At this point we begin to know what compassion means. It's what turns "me" into "we." Compassion is the only way out of resentment, anger or unskilled behavior. Compassion teaches us to love and share the *Chi*.

True Teachers

By Judy Hendricks, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Recently I was at the TCC Center in Albuquerque and some of us were discussing that it had been five years since Justin passed away. A TCC student who had never met Justin asked, "Why did Justin die?" The question surprised me, and this is the answer that came from me was, "Justin was in his 90s, he lived a very full life, he was teaching until the end. I think it was his time."

I do miss him but also realize I have gone much deeper in my TCC practice since his passing. Others have also had this realization. I'm so grateful to have Justin's books, CDs, and DVDs. Some of the great teachers did not write books, but we are fortunate Justin was a writer. He wrote about truth and lived the truth.



Justin was sincere, genuine and spoke the truth. I remember sitting on his couch as he told me about his teacher, Roshi Joshu Sasaki, and living in California. I meant to ask him when he left California, but what came out of my mouth was, "When did you leave Roshi?" He smiled sweetly and said that would be very hard to say, since he had never left Roshi.

I remember those words vividly. I can still feel the vibrations from that statement. When someone speaks the truth, we remember it clearly. Justin never left his teacher. At the end of my TCC practice I give thanks to Justin. And to my TCC teacher, Carmen Brocklehurst. I'm grateful and I give thanks.

Anchored In Awareness

By Sandy McAlister, Hayward, California

In our T'ai Chi Chih practice it is important to balance the softness of the practice with focused attention. If the mind is allowed to wander, the *Chi* may rise, giving way to ungrounded movements. I've experienced this when doing a lot of TCC at workshops or annual conferences where I have been distracted and not kept my attention fully present and inwardly focused. It results in headaches, lightheadedness, giddiness and unwise decision-making. When our attention is focused below the waist, it draws the energy downward and promotes grounding.

Softness is not completely limp and without form. A certain amount of effort is needed to shape the movements. And if the legs were completely soft we could not stand. So it is with our mental attention. We do not rigidly fix our attention on one spot, working to have no thoughts or trying to empty our minds. We work with our concentration to keep the mind inwardly focused, attentive but not grasping. The mind is alert, fully present, but it is not a calculating, judging or questioning mind. It is a feeling, aware and observant mind.

It takes effort and dedication to delve deep into the heart of TCC. When first learning the practice we are mostly concerned about how to physically do the moves: Are we soft; do we flow; are we doing the movements correctly; are we completing the weight shift, etc.? After learning the outer form, so to speak, our attention is free to move inward. We begin to work with our concentration and the mind.

At this point we need to *do* very little. The body remains soft and undemanding, responsive to the mind. Through awareness, our body is reminded to stay soft and open. Through awareness, we maintain our grounded connection, feeling rooted in the soles of our feet. The body has already been taught these lessons. Our focused attention gives reminders to the body to respond. We do not have to *do* anything. Just allow.

Training the mind to keep it focused and not let it wander in a hundred directions is part of the practice of TCC. Sometimes we might want to drift off into nothingness, leaving behind our worries, but we always have to come back to here-and-now. Nothing will be changed; we will have only escaped from our problems for a short time. Doing a well-grounded practice with softness and continuity, over time, will bring about changes through the circulation and balancing of the *Chi*. Justin Stone often mentioned the many letters he received from TCC practitioners stating that TCC had changed their lives.

TCC is a soft and yielding practice. Yielding the mind to stillness rather than chatter. Yielding to inwardly listening. Allowing the body to be moved by the flow of the *Chi* rather than trying to do it right. But the practice is anchored through grounding and awareness. Delve deeper. There is always more to learn. There is always less to *do*.



At left: Santa Barbara student and teacher retreat; see page 22 for reflections about the event.

Pyramid Poems Inspired By Specific Movements

Daughter On The Mountaintop

pull
energy
from the earth
gushing up and over
down and through
open
up

– TOM HANCOCK

Daughter In The Valley

start
high to
go low - build
a column of
white glowing
light to
heaven

– TISH JARAMILLO

Push Pull

all
the trees
love you and
the great river
speaks into
your heart:
love

– DENISE CLEMEN

Working The Pulley

waist
turning
synchronize
arms legs me chi
effortless
it comes
free

– JENETH RUNDLE

Light At The Top Of The Head

Light At The Temple
lifting
on the thread
of golden light.
pioneers
grounding
lode

– REBECCA P.

Joyous Breath

breathe
deep let
do feeling
over flowing
waterfall
clear light

Chi
– MARY W.

Pyramid Poems Inspired By Specific Movements

Passing Clouds

the
clouds pass
by slowly
moving peacefully
and then down
towards the
feet
– P.R.

soft
fluid
gently pass
connection with
earth and self
I love
clouds
– RACHEL

as
hands pass
feel the air
continuous
energy
motion
zen
– VERONICA FLEMING

Carry The Ball To The Side

ah!
the worlds
within are
the world without
no difference
out or
in
– DORA WIEMANN

I
follow
the form now
not thinking but
feeling each
unfold
joy
– Mary R.

feel
carry
the ball to
the side's tickling
feeling and
cooling
Chi
– ROBERT MONTES
DE OCA

Pulling In The Energy

in
pulling
energy
come join come play
life within
shining
through
– PAULINE

star
alight
infuse us
illuminate
we receive
annoint
alight!
– C.B.

The Hidden Gem In TCC

By Daniel Pienciak, Howell, New Jersey

Recently, I suggested that Seijaku (the advanced form of T'ai Chi Chih, as described by Justin Stone) is like a gem hidden within TCC. This analogy appeals to me because of the increased and very rich benefits that often are realized through regular practice of Seijaku, which enhance the benefits of TCC. I understand the word advanced as referring to advanced benefit, more so than a perhaps misconstrued meaning of it being only for TCC experts.

“*Of*” is the other important word in Justin’s descriptor. Seijaku is as if a gem to be found in the movements of TCC through the application of an added principle – that of “holding fast, and letting go”. In a way, this means that I am not taking full advantage of what TCC has to offer if I deprive myself of Seijaku in doing TCC practice. I believe that once any practitioner is well familiar with, comfortable with and regularly practicing TCC, it behooves them to study Seijaku, discover this hidden gem and receive its riches.

It is said that every human being is born with innate creativities. As we grow up, and the responsibilities of life and cultural conventions are thrust upon us, these innate creative tendencies are often stifled and eventually buried (along

with a sense of freedom to express emotions). Several times, I heard Justin teach that Seijaku can help us to rediscover our childlike innate creativity, which is so much of who we can be as thriving human beings.

Specifically, Justin referred to himself becoming inspired from within to discover new harmonizations in his jazz improvisations, and new innovations in his oil painting techniques.

I remember at an informal gathering at a New Jersey conference, when Justin was seated at the piano, asking him if he would play “Deep Purple.” He hesitated, saying that he didn’t know if he could remember it anymore. After a careful, somewhat stilted few bars, the tune came to him as from a well deep inside him, and I was privileged to hear and enjoy harmonizations which were completely new to my ear, yet so beautiful in enhancing that old tune.

Discover the hidden gem in your TCC practice by learning and continuing to practice Seijaku. Remember, “You cannot appease the hunger by reading the menu.”



Growing From Student Into Teacher

By Julie Barrier, Oakland, New Jersey

I have been teaching an ongoing, open enrollment T'ai Chi Chih class for two years at the Senior Center in Oakland, New Jersey where I live. I started as a student in this class when Bill Moore was the instructor (and studied with him for four years before becoming an accredited instructor). I was an active member of the center community during this time, also involved in art and yoga classes.

I felt a *ying/yang* energy in my transition from being a student peer to the teacher leading the weekly practice. On the one hand I know the students well enough to feel comfortable with them. On the other hand, I was not confident that I could follow in the footsteps of Bill, an excellent, experienced and well-respected teacher. My fellow students were not ready to give up his expertise for my novice teaching. I was so nervous during those first months of teaching that I did not sleep the night before each class. Instead I would be up all night mentally going through each movement. With patience, my daily practice enabled me to let go of this fear. I began to feel open to the *Chi* creating inspiration and inner strength to accept that my enthusiasm for teaching TCC was enough.

Class attendance fluctuates between 17 and 25 people each week; half of the students have more than five year's experience while the other half are at varying beginner stages. I am fortunate to be a retired school teacher and welcome the challenges of teaching such a diverse group of elders. Never would I have dreamt that I could teach for fun and joy in my retirement. Each week, while teaching principles and demonstrating movements, I become more patient, kind, supportive and nurturing to my peers. Lastly, sitting in silence for five minutes at the end of each class allows us to feel and savor the benefits of practice. We all leave with smiles.



Seated Meditation

By Carol Spicer, Fair Lawn, New Jersey

I wrote the following poem after attending the 2014 teacher conference and Seijaku accreditation in New Jersey. Getting together with teachers and practitioners has always been a wonderful experience. Poetry seems to flow during the days immediately following T'ai Chi Chih events. Attending gatherings opens us to a greater flow of divine inspiration and creativity of unique forms.

I customarily lead a short seated meditation at the end of every class, and I sometimes include this poem as part of that. I am grateful to my accrediting signatory teachers, Dorene Krause and Phyllis Segal, for leading beautiful seated meditations at the end of their classes. Dorene's words were always poetic and lovingly chosen to enhance our meditative journey. Phyllis typically began her seated meditation with the *Nei Kung* ("This energy sea, this flowing *Chi*, from the *Tan T'ien*, below the navel, to the soles of the feet..."), repeating it three or four times and then systematically guiding us down through our bodies. She ended with more *Nei Kung* and added, "...filled with the fullness of life, filled with the fullness of life."

Seated meditation allows further grounding of the energy and soaking in the shared flowing *Chi*. I am not surprised when students tell me that the seated meditation is their favorite part of class, and that they don't want it to end. I recall feeling the same when I began my TCC journey. I continue Dorene's tradition because as a teacher, I still savor each moment of the seated meditation and don't want it to end.

Within the Softness

Within the softness,
Within the flow,
No matter where we go,
We always have a place to stay,
With all the time in the world,
Within the softness,
Within the flow.

No matter where our thoughts have been,
No matter where our thoughts may go,
We can always return,
To the sweet softness,
To the everlasting flow.

Within the softness
Within the flow,
In our one true home we really know,
Our world opens wide,
We're free,
At peace,
Complete,
Vibrant and alive,
Within love's softness,
Within love's flow.

T'ai Chi Chih Spiritually Searching

By Lisa Jacobs, Gurnee, Illinois

I attended my first T'ai Chi Chih class when my children were small. It was offered through the Gurnee Park District – an evening course held in a beautiful, large, wood-framed room. I needed to try something new, something different, something that motivated and excited me (as many stay-at-home parents, working parents and retired folks do). When teaching, we must let our TCC classes be that to our students, as my first TCC class was to me. Today, perhaps because of that beautiful wood-framed room, I seek out spiritual spaces to teach, practice, share, give, live.

Before my TCC immersion-process began, I had not heard of the Tao, or *yin* and *yang*, but once I did, I was hooked. This energy-work expanded and continues to expand the way I see the world. Indeed, the way I understand the world, and each new practice and class I teach, expands this spiritual understanding.

My ballet background helped me learn the TCC movements, or so my ego thought. But actually, it took years to undo what I incorrectly assimilated from ballet into my TCC practice. The movements were correct, but my understanding of how to move would take years and much dedication to fix.

What I've learned though practice and teaching is that how to move is so much more important than the movement itself. In TCC, as well as ballet, it is a question of flow. The most brilliant technicians can be the most boring dancers, whereas a student of lesser abilities can bring an energy to the stage that people will not only notice and enjoy, but will also respond to in very real and positive ways.

Sometimes the simplest things are the hardest, because, well, they're simple. They are clean, pure, with no strings attached – and with this elevation comes crystal-clear intent, which makes understanding easier because it's right there to see. It's in view. It's accessible. It's beautiful and ego-free.

Ed Altman, the former head of TCC and the accrediting teacher during my training, was very specific in his instructions to keep our teaching focused exclusively on Justin Stone's teaching. I brought in fascinating Zen books, but Ed was having none of it. Keep it simple; keep it pure; keep it TCC.



Ed was principled, disciplined and focused; I was captivated. The more I learned, the greater became my curiosity. I can only imagine that Justin's path perhaps felt similar when he sought something more – different experiences and mentors, a different and spiritually-based existence.

Justin wrote and spoke about much of his life's work, which is published through Good Karma Publishing. I confess that it took several starts to read *Abandon Hope*. The title itself is scary, right? It ran contradictory to my parochial school education in which a good student should be humble, obedient and even submissive perhaps, respecting elders and teachers. Isn't that how I was raised? However, TCC's energy-work is empowering. It led me from my past and into an exciting future.

Before beginning my TCC journey, I attended the National Academy of Arts, a performing arts high school in Champaign, Illinois. It was a six-hour drive from home, which was rather scary for a high school student in a competitive environment. I received a full scholarship and incredible instruction. I then attended Barat College in Lake Forest, Illinois, and was perhaps attracted to its small community.

I married outside my Roman Catholic faith, much to the chagrin of my parents, and into Reform Judaism. Fortunately, my fiancée and I met a very interesting Rabbi who changed my view on organized religion and challenged my thinking. I was intrigued and felt my upbringing expanding. I would feel this again, years later, when I began my TCC journey.

What I discovered, and continue to discover, is that life is about learning, and how we assimilate this learning. It's about expansion, evolution, growth and change. However, many fear what is different, what is new. Sometimes, I resist it, too, though not for long; my TCC practice won't allow it. My TCC journey continues to expand my horizons, enabling me to embrace change, to become what I'm certain I'm here to become.

My counsel to my students? Trust the Tao, and fear it not. This is easier said than done, but we must allow ourselves and our students that new beginning we are seeking. What I have discovered through my practice is that our passageway to that new beginning is TCC – both its movements and its philosophy.

Support From Near & Far

By Dana Cline, Belton, South Carolina

I have always believed that we have internal energy – a connection to the cosmic force of the universe if you will. Most of my life I have looked for a way to connect deeper to this energy but not until I was introduced to T'ai Chi Chih did I truly understand the benefits of moving this *Chi*.

I started practice with Opie Reed in South Carolina, almost ten years ago, but to my regret not always faithfully. I felt the absence of the moving *Chi*, and daily practice is now a must. **My day is not complete without the stillness that TCC brings to my mind and the awareness of the vital force that moves within me.**

On the occasions that I've had an extremely stressful day and feel that my *Chi* is blocked, doing just one movement will restore the serenity and allow the *Chi* to flow unhindered. The rhythmic motion of *yin* and *yang* – side-to-side following the *tan t'ien*, arms gently rotating in time to the flow – comfort me like being rocked as a child. For this calming of the mind, Passing Clouds is my favorite movement.

This has led me to the next phase of the journey, to become accredited so I may pass this beautiful moving meditation to others. Reaching out to the TCC community brought me in contact with Lisa Otero, an accredited teacher in California. I have been practicing with her via Skype to refine my movements. This has been an amazing experience that I would recommend to students and teachers. Being able to work with another instructor in this manner has great rewards and has given me **another perspective on the practice**. My movements have softened and I better understand the effort of no effort. I hope more teachers will embrace this new way of reaching out and students will take advantage of these kinds of classes and sharing the experience of TCC anywhere in the world.

Opie is very supportive of the work I am doing with Lisa, who I hope will be my “second signature” teacher. With Lisa's encouragement and under Opie's supervision, I am starting to practice-teach in his class. The opportunity to give basic instruction and get feedback from students and Opie has been very beneficial. With their patient guidance and support, I hope to be accredited in October, so I may share the joy of movement. May the beauty and serenity of TCC always be with us.

“ I hope more
teachers
will embrace
this new way
of reaching out

A TCC Love Story

By Judy Anne Light, Colorado Springs, Colorado

I have reconnected to T'ai Chi Chih after 20 years of estrangement, and it's like re-finding a childhood sweetheart at a class reunion later in life. I am overcome with memories of our early bonding together. **I remember the passion of our initial connection, feeling we were soul mates**, being inseparable and intertwined in daily interaction with a feeling of everlasting support, safety, enrichment and love.

But then somehow, life began to separate us – with me experiencing cross-country moves, changing careers and jobs, overloaded schedules with multiple children and aging parents, and overall life opportunities and hardships, situations that should have bonded us more closely together but instead pressed us further apart.

Until an invitation to reconnect at Eliza Fulton's place in Glenwood Springs, Colorado this past Fall, and then again at a retreat with Pam Towne in Denver, Colorado this Spring. We found ourselves face-to-face, *tan t'ien* to *tan t'ien*, for several days, with plenty of time to catch up and see how the years had seasoned us into heightened maturity and wisdom. We discovered a more acute awareness and attention to detail, **a more patient appreciation of subtlety and grace**, and a more gracious and trusting acceptance of flow, continuity, release and balance. We found ourselves falling in love all over again, the bubbling spring bubbling within us, as the flame of our youth, our Vital Force, more vibrantly rekindled than ever before.

I felt the power of the *Chi* – that crafty matchmaker that had sustained our connection over time and space. It opened its wide and limitless (oh so big) arms to our reconnection and to the whole community of TCC that was there to share our coming together again.

I am looking forward to never letting my sweetheart go. I see us holding hands through the decades and spending our distant years Rocking Motion together, reminiscing about the times we've reached the Mountain Top, traversed the Valley, Pulled in Energy, worked Taffy to softening, and watched Passing Clouds move before our eyes. Thank you *Chi* for reigniting us. Thank you and thank you again.



Conversation Starters To Continue At The 2017 Conference

By Marie Dotts (Conference Coordinator), Loveland, Colorado,
and Lisa Otero (Program & Outreach Coordinator),
Port Hueneme, California

Topic 1: Giving and Receiving Correction: Aligning with Teh and the Continually Evolving *Vital Force*

T'ai Chi Chih is an unending journey toward oneself and toward Oneness with all things. Justin Stone reminded us often that we are all in a state of "Becoming" and that TCC can greatly influence our path.

Antonia Cooper shared in *The Vital Force* (May 2013), "It cannot be stated enough that we are all at different levels of softness and embodying the effort of no effort in our practice, but as we come to understand how to move in applying the principles, our form will change and blossom and become even softer and flowing without effort."

Justin expressed his trust in each TCC teacher by not requiring recertification. Instead, he believed *teh*, the power of inner sincerity and integrity, will lead teachers to find ways to continually improve their practice. He also shared that sincere teachers will gradually come to realize and embody the true way of movement in TCC.

At this year's conference, we would like to discuss how we may more fully embody *teh* to accord with the continually evolving *Vital Force* in our TCC practice. Some ideas for discussion:

- What is our relationship to our practice? Are we truly open to the *Chi* guiding and "growing" us or do we, on some level, believe we have arrived? What can we do to support continual growth in our practice?
- How do we receive correction? Does our ego kick in and lead us to react with defensiveness and/or does our inner critic take over and make us feel unworthy? When anchored in our *tan t'ien*, might a different response be possible? How would the *tan t'ien* receive a correction?
- How do we give correction to our students and fellow teachers? What calls us to offer a correction? Where are we coming from when we give correction? Is there judgment? Are we seeking, on some level, to establish that we are right and they are wrong? What is the most supportive way to give a correction?
- How do we resolve differences amongst ourselves without creating polarization? How can we explore our differences in a way that honors what is alive and true and evolving in each of us?



Justin was continually correcting teachers and serious students and encouraged us to correct our students and ourselves. Some teachers sought out and looked forward to corrections by Justin; others shrank from it; some never had the chance to know what their response would be. As teachers, may we contemplate the possibility that we stand in for Justin, for ourselves, for our students and for each other? Imagine that a generous and kind TCC colleague might offer a key to unlock your practice, and that you might be that change-agent for someone else.

Topic 2: The Physical & the Spiritual in T'ai Chi Chih

The highlight of past conferences, while Justin was with us, was the spiritual lecture he offered. Just because he's not here to inspire and prod us doesn't mean we can't do that for each other. Spending four days with others who have devoted their time and energy to sharing TCC is a gift. If we use

our time well and take advantage of giving and receiving, it'll be the gift that keeps on giving.

What brought you to TCC? What brings most of your students? What has kept you doing TCC all these years? Are you curious or befuddled when you read Justin's writings and see all those Japanese, Chinese and Sanskrit words? What was your teacher's relationship with Justin's writings?

We'll break into small groups to share whether we came to TCC primarily for physical or spiritual reasons, and whether and how that focus has changed over the years. We'll also share how our personal experience of TCC as a physical and/or spiritual practice influences and guides our teaching and our relationship with Justin's writings, and the way we share Justin's philosophical/spiritual writings with our students.

Suggested Reading: You may wish to re-read Justin's short essay, "The Physical & the Spiritual in T'ai Chi Chih," published in *Spiritual Odyssey* (Good Karma Publishing). This article is also available for free at taichichih.org (under Justin Stone > articles). Also, free for download are transcriptions of intriguing lectures Justin offered at previous conferences, including my (Lisa) favorite, "Cosmic Rhythm," available at gkpub.org.

These are rich topics to help us explore possibilities for sharing and personal growth. Honesty and openness with ourselves and with each other will allow us to more fully embody *teh* in our practice, in our teaching and in our relations with each other. When we accord with *Chi* as it develops and guides us, our community can grow and flourish, and the practice of TCC can spread far and wide. As Justin said, "The teachers' *teh* is our jewel, and I fully expect this great power to bring T'ai Chi Chih to deserving people all over the planet."

Justin Stone Speaks

By Justin F. Stone

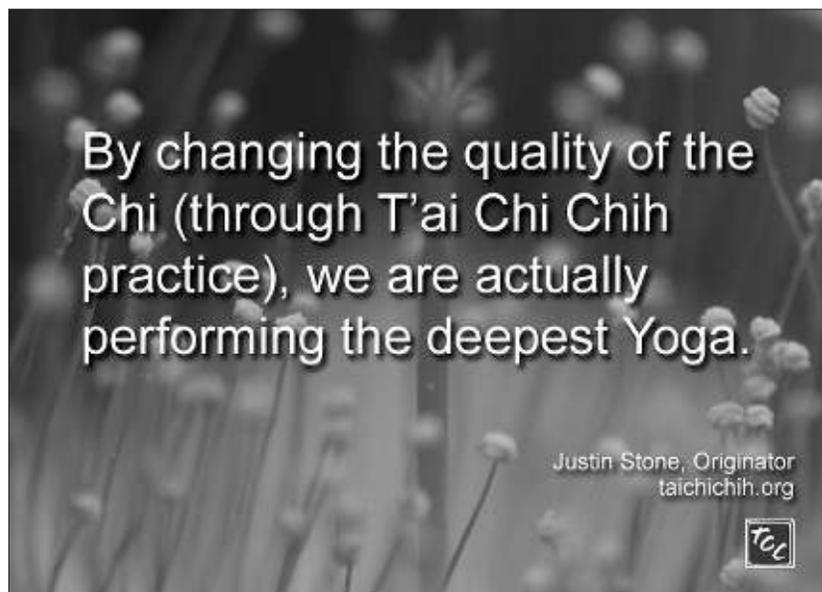
From **Justin Stone Speaks on T'ai Chi Chih**,
a transcription of a taped lecture, excerpted and reprinted
with permission from Good Karma Publishing.

A woman in the audience asks: "You never mention good or bad in your talks, but usually refer to positive and negative. Why?"

"Well, good and bad are moral judgments and what is good in one cultural may be bad in another. When I am staying in India or a Chinese city I have to be like the bamboo and flow with ideas that seem basically wrong to me. Living with an Indian family in India I was dismayed to find that my kind hostess, the Mother of my young friend Kashek and his brothers lived in a room behind the kitchen in the servant's quarters. Child labor at a Chinese YMCA caused me to grit my teeth. Watching a camel driver at a camel auction in East Africa beating a poor hobbled camel because he could not get to his feet, left me frustrated and unhappy. And let me relate an amusing incident that took place in Kyoto, Japan.

I was seated in a streetcar that became very crowded. A bent old lady accompanied by a man about thirty years her junior boarded the street car. Seeing her stooped and frail I got up from my seat, bowed, and pointed to it so she could sit down. She then bowed to the young man, whom I guessed to be her son-in-law and he promptly sat down, while she remained standing. I felt like throwing him off the streetcar. Good and bad are abstract concepts and can have entirely different meanings in different cultures and places."

~ ~ ~ ~



A man in the audience wants to know if Justin still teaches T'ai Chi Ch'uan:

"The answer is I still do it and esteem it very much. But I do not teach it anymore, T'ai Chi Chih has taken its place. It is not easy to teach T'ai Chi Ch'uan, nor for that matter any worthwhile discipline, T'ai Chi Chih being a welcome exception. People do not really want to go through the learning process. And they don't want to do the practice that is necessary to accomplish almost anything worthwhile. We know the Sufis are wise people. And one Sufi Master pointed out that you have to learn how to teach for man does not want to be taught. And before that you have to teach the man that there is something to be learned. At first people want to learn only what they imagine is to be learned, a pre-concept. And usually they want a carrot held in front of their noses. That is a picture of the rewards they will receive if they do study.

One time an aspiring student came to a Sufi Master and implored, 'Teach me.' The Master answered, 'You do not know how to learn.' To that the student replied, 'Teach me how to learn.' The Master then asked, 'Are you ready to let me teach you how to learn?'

The beauty of T'ai Chi Chih is that the practice itself does the teaching. T'ai Chi Chih teaches you T'ai Chi Chih."

~ ~ ~ ~

An audience member wonders if there is more to the science of the Chi than Justin has revealed.

"The truth is this is an infinite science, having to do with creation and destruction, and everything in-between. How can it all be revealed in words? But if you practice you will come to know it's all within you. It is true that there are esoteric practices I can speak about, but I am not here to give you a biographical travelogue. One time in Taipei I met a very old man who was reputed to be the last expert in the little known T'ai Chi Gik. He was 89 years old and his skin was that of a baby. I was told that T'ai Chi Gik had once been outlawed in China because too many had been injured by it or died from it.

I don't know if this is true because this is all second-hand. A Master of *Chi* knows where the *Chi* is flowing most actively, relative to the time of the day and the season of the year. And he can easily affect that part of the body. It is said that with a touch a Master can stop the flow of *Chi* and the victim is then helpless to do much of anything. If he struggles too hard he can

injure himself and might even die. Only the one who has inflicted the damage can clear it away and heal the victim. And that is also an axiom in the martial arts.

Going back to the time of day, season of the year, et cetera, it seems a shame that western doctors pay no attention to these pertinent matters. Though your wise old Grandmother certainly did, when she gave you a Spring tonic and other helpful and timely aids."

~ ~ ~ ~

Is T'ai Chi Chih is a martial art?

"The answer is; emphatically no – in the sense that we do not use it for self-defense or any violent activity. In a deeper sense, however the aura of *Chi* you build around you is the greatest self-defense, a psychic self-defense that can become apparent in your life once the *Chi* is flowing smoothly. T'ai Chi Chih is inner oriented. It is not a performance or a dance. Indeed the beauty of T'ai Chi Chih is far different from the graceful actions of the dance or the threatening movements of such disciplines as Karate, Judo and Aikido.

One of my first T'ai Chi Chih students was a medical orderly. He had studied T'ai Chi Ch'uan with me at the University of New Mexico and made rapid progress in T'ai Chi Chih. At the end of the beginners' course he simply said, 'Well, I don't need you any longer.' The other students were shocked, thinking he had been very disrespectful to the Master. However I pointed out to them that 'his' was the right attitude. He meant that I had given him the tools and it was now up to him to use them. Nobody can do it for you. You must travel the path yourself.

I remember a skeptical psychiatrist who took the very first course given. After the second class he told me, 'Well, sure I feel something. How do I know I'm not imagining it?' 'How do you know you're here, Doctor,' I answered. Each will have his own experience. The depths will never be entirely plumbed."

~ ~ ~ ~

An audience member suggests that Justin has spoken of the emotions but not mentioned intellect. Why?

"He is quite observant to notice that. First of all as Zen points out the emotions and the intellect must be in balance. When one or the other is too strong there will be suffering. The one who responds to everything emotionally is easily swayed and frequently has his feelings hurt. Conversely the overly intellectual person, and I have known many among the faculty of universities, finds it hard to love and to be loved. Everything must be analyzed. These two, the intellect and emotions must be brought into balance.

One helpful suggestion; occasionally during the day stop to notice your state of mind, then look at your posture. Don't correct it, just look at it. You will find that your state of mind has a good deal to do with your posture, and you will also find that you're posture influences your state of mind. Once again we have the mind, body continuum. Actually the intellect plays little part in T'ai Chi practice. The brilliant head of the Philosophy department at a major university tried to learn T'ai Chi Ch'uan in one of my classes, and was unable to do so. I'm sure she had the highest I.Q. in the class, and yet practically all the others were learning rapidly. There is the time for the intellect but T'ai Chi practice time is not it. Just do the movements and concentrate in the soles of the feet.

One thought; don't forget that T'ai Chi Chih is not religion, having nothing to do with dogma and doctrine, but it very definitely is spiritual in nature. And it is joyous, not work but effortless play, that play of the Sage. Remember what Zen writer Paul Reps says, 'If it isn't fun, it's better left undone.' Just do what you can comfortably, and you'll get the benefits. And now I would like to quote a brief passage from Ch'an Buddhist literature as a concluding note.

“ don't forget that
T'ai Chi Chih is
not religion, having
nothing to do with
dogma and doctrine

Who is capable of embracing this? The four seasons follow each other in succession. The Sun and the Moon shine constantly. Truth suffers no fundamental alteration, and the great T'ai Chi is not confined to a single place. Therefore free yourself to yield to whatever happens to you, rise and fall with it. And you may be simultaneously a common man and a sage."



Live From Aston, Pennsylvania, April 2017

Eleven new teachers from eight U.S. states and Canada were accredited in Aston, Pennsylvania, in early April. As Host, it is always amazing to behold the transformation from T'ai Chi Chih teacher candidate to accredited teacher. Below are writings from the group. — APRIL LEFFLER

~ BY SARA LEONARD, FALMOUTH, MAINE ~

It's Thursday afternoon of accreditation week in Pennsylvania. The most prevalent thought that comes to mind is what a sincere, warm and caring group have assembled because of one common thread, TCC. Group events have been stressful and uncomfortable even at my age. But the openness of TCC people is wonderful to experience.

~ BY KATHLEEN McALLISTER, BROOMALL, PENNSYLVANIA ~

This next part of my journey is a transition time, a time to give thought to who I want to be and what I have to share. TCC has brought the realization that I can let go of what I've thought I was supposed to be, that future possibilities are limited only by my imagination. This week has been a heart opener, a beginning of getting to my core — with support and great *Chi* surrounding me.

I had been practicing TCC for a year, when one day during class the only thought running through my mind was, "Tell her you want to be a teacher, tell her you want to be a teacher." Public speaking is so fearful that even walking to the front of the room after class and telling my teacher that I wanted to teach had my heart pounding. But to stop the nagging thought, I just did it, pounding heart and all. Then I turned around and left.

Over the next weeks I would ask about what's next — a book, retreat, much more practice. The training was getting closer and closer. I got in line for the rollercoaster. The presentation made it a triple loop-de-loop rollercoaster. Now that my ride is almost over, I'm happy to say it was only a double loop-de-loop.

I've received much help and support from Sandy, April, auditing teachers and other candidates. I'm so happy I stepped forward that day in class and now to be part of the TCC community. I look forward to calling them old friends and seeing them throughout the years.

~ BY LORRY MARCKETTA, LAKEWOOD, NEW JERSEY ~

Buffeted by the winds and waves of life, situations felt as though they attacked me from all sides. It seemed up to me to defend, solve or fix everything — my stuff, others' stuff. What has happened through TCC is difficult to describe. I've achieved a sense of wholeness, an absence needing to defend, to maintain barriers, facades. When I think back to a time before all these layers were established, I was 12 years old — free, full of possibility, unobstructed by others' opinions. TCC has enabled me to move through the ups and downs of life free of the encumbrance of my own old perceptions. In other words, I am discovering my real self — the one who's been hidden for so long.

The thought of watching others discover who they really are fills me with joy. This is what moved me to become a TCC teacher. In a way, I have fallen upward from closure to openness, from hiding to transparency, from fear to joy.

~ BY TIM BONIS, WILMINGTON, DELAWARE ~

The TCC community created a loving environment that opened up my perception. I came for a deeper understanding in my practice and left with a deeper understanding of myself. This week was more about softness in my life. The understanding of movements became easier as I became more vulnerable. Having experienced this process I see a purposeful path that has been created. Teaching was not on my list of things to do. TCC moved what I wanted and replaced it with what I needed.

~ BY LARRY FIRTH, REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN, CANADA ~

I felt like a TCC beginner again. Every single movement was worked on and improved. The experience was challenging, nerve wracking, joyous, calming, scary and exciting — such a wide array of emotions.

I have met so many wonderful students and instructors who were so supportive, accepting and helpful. I now feel so much better prepared to carry through on my goal of sharing this wonderful life changing practice with as many people as I can.

~ BY PARKER REYNOLDS, STRONGSVILLE, OHIO ~

I started my TCC journey about two years ago. As I grew in the practice, I began to notice changes, especially in how I was feeling. Since I was thinking of retiring and enjoyed TCC so much, I thought maybe it would be a good retirement job. I spoke with my teacher, and while she said that it's very rewarding to teach, there's not much income in it. So I put it on the back burner.

As I practiced and worked with my teacher, I realized something



Front Row (L to R): Sandy Springer, Megan McGrath, April Leffler, Sandy McAllister, Tim Bonis, Kathleen McAllister. Back Row (L to R): Lorry Marcketta, Nancy Johnson, Sara Leonard, Larry Firth, Parker Reynolds, Jennifer Chan Gaskins, Kent Jarratt.



Where in the World
Pia Roe, Sweden

was missing: pain in my right leg from hip replacement surgery and arthritis pain in my fingers. As time went on, other things also evolved. My aggressive nature (especially when driving) was relaxing. Rough edges were smoothing out. Panic and anxiety attacks also lessened. Twice during the last 18 months, when I would awaken from anxiety, I would get up and do a few minutes of Rocking Motion, and the anxiety would subside.

TCC has also increased joy in my life, and with an increased flow of *Chi*, I have experienced wellbeing. When I see the smiles of my grandchildren, or the beauty of a cardinal at a bird feeder, joy is there and it feels so right.

With faith, how could I not share this gift with others? I went back to my teacher and asked how I could become a TCC teacher. She laid out the path, and I took the steps to spread this wonderful gift to whoever would receive it. It feels great to know that after a life of taking, taking, taking I will now be giving, giving, giving.

~ BY MEG McGRATH, FORT BRAGG, CALIFORNIA ~

Teaching more than one person at a time is not my cup of tea, not in my comfort zone. I'll just stay in my small, safe, comfortable zone, thank you very much. And then Cosmic Consciousness laughed at my shyness and swept me up on its wave to reveal the egoic illusion that no longer served me, and never served the higher good. It was time to stop playing small, and while I took the call, I was scared to death.

I arrived with old egoic patterns playing out on a new stage. It was uncomfortable to observe my uncertainty, unworthiness, fear of failure, and rejection – all of which are the stuff of playing small. Yet their presence was necessary, as a reflected inner manifestation representing the outer form of my practice. They were an inner barometer, so to speak.

I watched as my outer practice transformed as quickly as my inner insecurities. How is it possible that in seven days I could go from being afraid to share my form and speak about a movement to enjoying the process of teaching a “mock” class of beginners? It was made possible through a healing, teaching, mentoring heart space, led and cultivated by Sandy McAlister and informed by April Lefler, the attending teachers, and my fellow candidates.

My transformed practice is an outward expression of a far deeper inner paradigm shift. I leave with confidence in my ability to carry TCC out into the world. I will honor these gifts and utilize them to my highest ability in service to humanity and the Cosmic Consciousness. I am humbled; I am honored for the opportunity.

~ BY SANDY SPRINGER, MARTINSVILLE, NEW JERSEY ~

The last five days have been joyous. Being surrounded by loving people who drop pretense and circumstance creates a feeling of belonging to a family that wants only good will and peace. It was also wonderful to have the opportunity to refine movements and move

into another deeper layer of experiencing TCC.

Having auditors attend was so helpful. We broke into small practice groups or received their help individually. They let us know they supported us, lovingly cheered us on and shared rich stories from their accreditation and teaching experiences. Their friendship and good humor was a gift indeed. A tremendous thanks to Sandy and April for their expertise and sharing. They found what was needed to guide us in beginning our teaching journey.

My favorite image to take home is doing a silent practice in a large circle early in the morning with dim light. The intent and spirit and abundant *Chi* that prevailed as we moved together is a picture to keep in my heart forever.

– BY KENT JARRATT, ASBURY PARK, NEW JERSEY

It was a couple of days into the teacher training when Sandy read from Justin Stone's *Spiritual Odyssey*. He was quoting from the Japanese monk, Senzaki: “It's better to discipline yourself than to have life do it for you.” This resonated so powerfully that it brought me to tears.

This was the reason why I came to this training: Life had been disciplining me for too long through multiple deaths in my family, from the near disintegration of my business, from chronic illness and from a move into subsidized housing. I wanted to make even more of a commitment to my TCC practice than I'd done over the last four years training with Daniel (and Diana, more recently).

I've recently begun to realize that the daily discipline of morning practice had helped me to feel in control of my life. The training was difficult and intense, yet joyful and alive. I now know I've reached a level of commitment-of discipline.

~~~~~

Silent Practice  
Breakfast  
Break it down  
Lunch  
Break into groups  
Talk, work, learn  
Write, move, critique  
Dinner  
Presentations  
Fun  
No sleep/sleep/no sleep  
Do it again tomorrow

First time away from my husband in 25 years  
First time away from my kids in 16 years  
I'm spreading my wings

T'ai Chi Chih  
Teacher Training  
Candidate  
Hopeful, scared  
Unsure  
Practice, learn  
Try  
Smile, laugh  
Breathe and  
Focus on the soles  
Of the feet

– ANONYMOUS

Thank you  
 T'ai Chi Chih  
 Teacher training  
 A week of my life  
 Spent in geographical  
 beauty-rain and sun  
 surrounded by Nature-  
 in a castle, of  
 encouragement.  
 Fulfilling my desire to teach TCC

Meeting new friends  
 and teachers-  
 a little scary-  
 even a lot scary-  
 Fear slowly turning to concentration  
 on improving  
 19 moves and 1 pose

Each day filled with  
 practice, practice, practice  
 early mornings and  
 late nights.

Wanting to do my best  
 and having the loving  
 support of strangers  
 who became diligent  
 task masters.  
 Teaching me  
 Helping me  
 Training me  
 Tiering me  
 Applauding me

I learned a lot  
 improved a lot  
 determined a lot to  
 succeed as much  
 as possible.  
 lots of information  
 I'm on overload.

And so the days went by-  
 practice, practice, practice:  
 practice-eat breakfast  
 practice-eat lunch  
 practice-eat dinner  
 practice-present my personal story  
 Presentation-  
 scary-yet all successful.  
 Every one of us

I improved a lot and  
 am more sure of myself  
 in what I have to offer  
 to my students,  
 my community, and my life  
 I have been "softened"  
 yet strengthened.

Teaching T'ai Chi Chih  
 my future endeavor, and  
 my class of old friends  
 awaits my return home  
 ready for the new improved me

— BY NANCY JOHNSON, LONG BEACH, CALIFORNI

# An Auditor's Thoughts On Accreditation

By Dorene Krause, Midland Park, New Jersey

**There was a time I did not know or understand the *Chi*** and knew little about myself as well. It was a time of struggle, a need to discover and love my true self. The *Chi* changes us and our perception. To experience TCC opens our minds and enriches our lives. It teaches self-worth, acceptance and compassion. We learn who that person is reflected in the mirror each morning. Looking inward we find many answers.

Attending and participating in your accreditation turned back many calendar pages and reminded me of a different person, not the me today. It gave me pause to reflect on my own accreditation and my journey since. I stepped back in time and saw myself in you. I, too, arrived with a small voice, little confidence, a bit timid and very nervous. Many shoulds and what ifs clamoring inside my brain. It was Autumn – a time of letting go with the gentleness of falling leaves, a profound lesson indeed.

I watched each of you – quiet observers, intent on absorbing it all, focused and clinging to every syllable of instruction. But it was your eyes that spoke to me and drew me into your space and time. The eyes reveal so many emotions: excitement, anxiety, trepidation, self-doubt and in that mix some joy and an occasional smile.

How appropriate that your time was Spring – a season of renewal and growth. I saw your inner beauty begin to blossom revealing who you are, growing in self-confidence, allowing the Chi to flow through you and in you.

Now you are an integral part our teaching community with TCC the common thread that connects us all. Our journey continues. We walk beside each other now, arm in arm, guiding, sharing and deepening our practice.

Thank you for the privilege of getting to know you and being part of your experience. Be proud and accepting of yourself. Share the *Vital Force* within you. You have much to offer.



*Where in the World* Nancy Frost, Boston, Massachusetts

# College Students' Experiences from Learning TCC

By April Leffler, Prospect Park, Pennsylvania

*Editor's Note: This is a continuation (from the February Vital Force) of April Leffler's student's journals from her T'ai Chi Chih class at Widener University in Chester, Pennsylvania, where April has been teaching TCC for PhysEd credit since 2008.*

## Journal 8

This is the first week back from Spring Break and I am pretty stress-free. During the break I showed my older sister some of our new movements. She had trouble bending her knees when shifting the weight, but she felt the difference between leaning forward versus standing straight, it got better.

## Journal 9

Our social media paper is due this week. I learned more about TCC than I thought I would. For example, Ms. April explained that some people live longer and are healthier overall because of TCC, but it surprised me that TCC could medically help someone's immune system. TCC kinda helps me relax and clear my mind from the B.S. during the week. Ms. April is a kind, cool and fun person; I'm glad she's the instructor for this class. If I do the movements outside of class I always hear her voice in my head telling me to "bring the attention to the soles of your feet, get out of your head." It may seem weird but that helps me become more comfortable with doing the movements. – BY KAITLYN G.

~~~~~

Week 5

This week I learned about the *tan t'ien*, the center of the energy in the body, and how it helps us in TCC. When practicing on my own I really focus on flowing through the *tan t'ien* and moving with it. And I noticed how much more fluent my moves were.

Week 6

This week I really enjoyed how we put the movements together for a long session because I haven't done it before. I noticed that the sensation I normally feel in my hands and feet, I felt throughout my entire body this time. I'm not going to lie: it was a pretty cool feeling. I tried to find that again this week but couldn't. Overall TCC has really relaxed my life and made me slow down and think about a situation before freaking out.

– BY NOLAN C.

~~~~~

Taking TCC as a gym class was something different. When I first heard the benefits, I thought it was complete crap. But when you said it could help with anxiety and depression, it got my attention. I have been dealing with both for about seven years, and it has always been a struggle. I decided to give TCC an honest chance because maybe it would help. I am so happy to say that it really has. Focusing on something other than my many problems is so relieving. TCC has become an extension of my therapy and treatment. I would recommend this class to anyone dealing with the same things because it has helped so much. – BY SELENA G.

~~~~~

I learned so much about TCC from researching the paper. It's amazing how much more of an effect TCC has on improving depression – much more than anti-depressants. This is especially true in the elderly. I found this so fascinating. TCC is scientifically proven to drastically benefit mental health. I am two years from becoming a social worker, three years from becoming a clinical social worker, one year from an internship, and I currently work as a pharmacy technician. I love my job very much but am more passionate about helping people improve their state of life and making them feel the best they can, whether it's through drug therapy or TCC. I love learning methods I will be able to incorporate into my professional career. When I took TCC as a gym requirement, I never thought it would be something I could use long-term, or recommend to patients and friends around me. I'm shocked at how much I enjoy and value this class, and am thankful I swapped yoga for it at the last minute. – BY JACKIE M.

~~~~~

My body feels warm

From the inside out

My hands sweat as if I can feel

Every fiber of my fingers coming alive.

My headache alleviates,

My neck curves just the right amount.

I feel vibrations of the ground's power

Coming to help me.

I want to feel like this every day.

– BY PAIGE M.



# Instagram, Facebook & Blog

There are many pathways for staying in touch and sharing T'ai Chi Chih with friends, family and students.

## FACEBOOK @

<https://www.facebook.com/taichichih>

Here is a list, recently posted on Facebook, of ten important things to know (and share) about TCC:

#1: T'ai Chi Chih activates, circulates, and balances our intrinsic energy, known as Chi or Qi.

#2: T'ai Chi Chih was originated by Justin Stone in 1974, in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

#3: T'ai Chi Chih is an original, modern, movement practice (born in 1974) that utilizes ancient principles for generating health and well-being.

#4: T'ai Chi Chih is a new way of working with our intrinsic energy. It is not a short form of any other practice. Like other *T'ai Chi* and *Qigong* practices, TCC cultivates *Qi/Chi*.

#5: T'ai Chi Chih is not a martial art (i.e., not a self-defense practice). The intention of TCC is peace.

#6: T'ai Chi Chih translates to: "Knowledge of the Supreme Ultimate." We always call the form "T'ai Chi Chih," rather than "T'ai Chi," both to differentiate it from other *Chi/Qi*-cultivation practices and to remind ourselves, and others, of the fullness of its peaceful intention.

#7: The full T'ai Chi Chih form consists of 19 movements and one pose.

#8: T'ai Chi Chih is not exercise routine, yet it provides many of the benefits of gentle physical exercise.

#9: The T'ai Chi Chih form can be adapted for those who wish to practice seated.

#10: The benefits of T'ai Chi Chih are cumulative. Consistent practice is the key.

## INSTAGRAM @

<https://www.instagram.com/taichichih/>

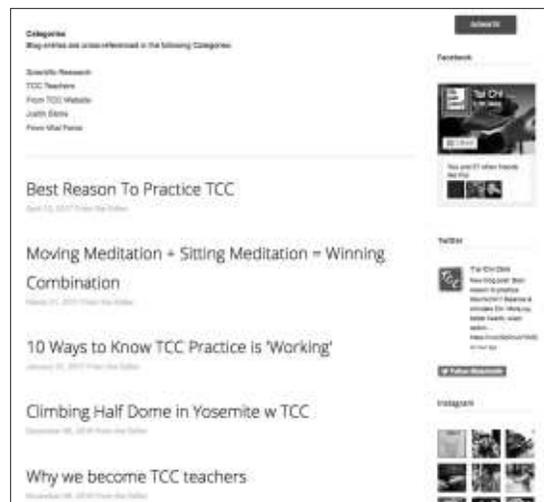
This is for visually-inclined community members. Use hashtag #taichichih to indicate permission for us to repost (with credit) your images. Below is a screen shot of the "official" T'ai Chi Chih page (center), as well as pages from "tcc4joy" and "vivaciousmelphotography" both of whom are TCC teachers.



## BLOG @

<http://www.taichichih.org/blog>

Have you seen this monthly feature? Please check it out. It's easy to share.



## The Little Things

By Nikol Price, Surprise, Arizona

**What do you do** to make your class more than simply exercise?

I'm a first year teacher finishing up my second class. When I teach, I don't want my students to learn only the movements of Tai Chi Chih, as beautiful and compelling as the form is. I want them to have an experience. I want them to look forward to coming to class each week and feel good when they walk out. Two ways I do this are with scent and sound.

On the first day of class, I ask students if any are allergic to eucalyptus, lavender or orange. So far, no one has been, so I spritz an essential oil spray into the air. I now spray before class and I often notice students walking into the classroom, taking a deep breath and smiling.

Sound is another important part of the learning environment. My classroom is in the Student Union building and the surrounding space is often filled with students laughing and talking with one another. Having music helps to make the outer noise less noticeable and also sets a tone for the class. My favorite albums for TCC are Marina Raye's *Being Peace* and David and Steve Gordon's *Misty Forest Morning*. (I've been practicing TCC to *Misty Forest Morning* since 1994 when I had it on cassette.) I also use the Naturespace app on my iPhone if I want nature sounds without instrumental music. The students seem to enjoy the music and it helps them understand on a deep level that this is a time for them to be in the moment and relax.

What little things do you do in your class to make it an experience? What music do you use? I would love to hear from you and would be happy to write an article with everyone's responses. If you would like to share your special touches, please email me (see <http://www.taichichih.org/tai-chi-chih-teachers>) and we'll see everyone's ideas in the August *Vital Force*.

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## My Practice

By Donna Aldous, Dorintosh, Saskatchewan, Canada (by way of Arizona)

**Passing Clouds has made such an impression on me.** I am on an eight-day silent retreat at an abbey south of Tucson and north of the Mexican boarder near Sonoita, Arizona. We are in the desert foothills surrounded by the Santa Rita Mountains. It's a perfect place for silence and reflection at the beginning of a new year. Looking back, I credit T'ai Chi Chih with introducing me to the sound of silence. Fifteen years of being in the present moment (or at least trying to be) has prepared me well for an hour spent daily in silent prayer. I find all I need or could ever want there.

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## Update

By Victoria Mogilner, Scottsdale, Arizona

**I have been teaching T'ai Chi Chih** for 8 years at Gilbert Senior. It started as a small class and has increased to 49 people every week. It was slow at first and the changes have been wonderful to watch. Balance, being able to work as a group and letting people find their way is a wonderful journey. I look forward to sharing the full story with you in the August issue.

## Soaring Lessons

By Donna Deffenbaugh, Prescott, Arizona

*On any given day we may come to T'ai Chi Chih with lingering fatigue and tension. We may try to push through the movements because we know we must practice. It may be helpful to use some visualization to help bring us back to basics. As Justin said in the Albuquerque Journal on July 28, 2005: "I call it the effort of no effort."*

Glistening black on this brisk morning  
Common Raven *Corvus corax*

Rough-hewn cliff ledge launchpad  
Glide above the depths and colors  
Catch the Canyon's grandest current  
Off to play with light and air

Rise and roll  
Swoop and soar  
Float and fall  
Tumble on the thermal lift  
Then rest against a sharp blue sky...

Raven  
Cold crisp morning  
Heat comes rising  
Changing ever changing

Altitude.

Attitude.



# T'ai Chi Chih, An Evidence Based Mindfulness Practice: Literature Review. Alternative & Complementary Therapies

By Vestal, M.A. (In press), San Isidro, Costa Rica

*Editor's Note: Anita Vestal's full research paper, from which these snippets are excerpted, including footnotes, is available at [ssrn.com/abstract=2906597](http://ssrn.com/abstract=2906597).*

## Abstract

T'ai Chi Chih (TCC) is a moving meditation positively associated with physiological and psychological conditions, such as immunity to shingles virus, reduction in inflammatory markers, decrease in sympathetic nervous system, geriatric depression and chronic diseases in cancer survivors. Consisting of 19 repetitive movements and one pose, TCC is easy to learn and particularly accessible to the aging population. It is taught by accredited instructors who have completed an intensive training that is standardized worldwide...

## Text

There is a growing body of evidence showing meditative movement practices are viable alternatives capable of improving various physiological and psychological conditions. In this review, research is focused on a moving meditation known as T'ai Chi Chih (TCC). TCC is a contemporary discipline originated in 1974 that has demonstrated efficacy in at least twelve controlled trials over a twenty-year period. The studies reviewed in this article position TCC as an evidence based intervention for physical conditions including chronic diseases in cancer survivors, immunity to the shingles virus, reduction in inflammatory diseases, physical functional performance, sleep quality, and others. In addition, the literature review demonstrates efficacy of TCC with respect to improvement of psychological and mental health conditions such as depression, stress and general well being.

## What is T'ai Chi Chih?

Originated in 1974 by Justin Stone, a T'ai Chi Ch'uan master, the practice consists of movements focused on circulating and balancing of Chi, the body's intrinsic energy. TCC consists of 19 standalone movements and one pose that can be done by almost anyone. While the form was originated in the mid

1970's, it is founded upon and incorporates ancient energy movement principles (called yin-yang principles.) Stone originated TCC movements because he believed more westerners would benefit from moving meditation practices if the movements were easy to learn and easy to do...

## Mindful movement meditation

Meditative movement is defined as those practices that utilize movement or posture and a meditative state to achieve deep states of relaxation. It includes practices such as qi-gong, t'ai chi and others. Physical movement has long been employed as a foundation for cultivating mental skills such as attention, self-control or mindfulness, with recent studies documenting the impact of mindful movement training on focus, attention and cognitive functioning...

## T'ai Chi Chih practice improves physical and mental health

... We will summarize findings of the TCC-specific studies through several lenses...

## Sleep Quality

Compared to control groups receiving an educational sleep seminar, participants in a TCC group had improved sleep quality and diminished fatigue. Sleep is intended to be restorative for living systems; disruptive sleep patterns affect the normal diurnal rhythm of many regulatory systems including negative effects on glucose, lipids, inflammation and blood pressure...

## Immunity and Reduction of Inflammation

Incidence and severity of herpes zoster (shingles) increase markedly with increasing age in association with a decline in varicella-zoster virus (VZV) specific cell-mediated immunity (CMI). ... Gains in health functioning were found in participants who received TCC and were most marked in those older adults who had the greatest impairments of health status...

## Exercise and Physical Performance

Three studies have concluded that TCC is a beneficial exercise option for older adults. These studies focused on the feasibility and acceptability of TCC as a form of exercise that seniors would be willing to do...

## Stress, Quality of Life, Mental-Emotional Functioning

Detert and colleagues conducted a pilot study using a single sample pre-post design to inquire into the effects of TCC on the physical symptoms of stress and general well being...

## TCC is well suited to RCT research

Compared to the extensive body of work on mindfulness-based practices, fewer scientific studies have examined the mechanisms underlying movement-based embodied contemplative practices. However, movement-based practices have been shown to alleviate the symptoms of various clinical conditions and elicit measurable changes in physiological stress markers, cognitive functioning, sensorimotor acuity, as well as emotional states. An important challenge for contemplative scientists is to advance understanding of the mechanisms underlying these complex practices...

## Qualitative comments from TCC study participants

Campos and Detert reported on outcomes from a qualitative segment of their studies. Participants in the TCC groups felt that they derived mental-emotional and physical benefits from the practice...

## Conclusions and Recommendations

TCC is a "user friendly" practice which can be easily taught to a wide range of populations; for example, ages ranging from pediatrics to geriatrics, individuals with physical limitations, emotional concerns, and mental health issues. It is learned in a relatively short period of time making it a perfect modality for research studies. No special equipment is needed; participants can do TCC standing or seated.

CONTINUED ON P. 21

## New Mexico TCC Intensive

By Guy Kent, Albuquerque, New Mexico

**A T'ai Chi Chih Intensive brings out the finer points** of a personal practice. After accreditation, there are few guided opportunities to continue to refine and learn more about each movement. Sure, the teacher conference is one place to refresh and practice with experienced teachers; auditing an accreditation course is another. An Intensive provides the opportunity to be the student again and to work with Sandy, Pam or Dan without (some might say) the stress and emotion of an accreditation.

I attended an Intensive with Sandy three years ago. This provided an opportunity to observe the subtleties of the ankles, forearms and wrists along with the coordinated motion of the arms during Working The Pulley and Passing Clouds. The Intensive brought new revelations and enjoyment. Sandy also offered some handy tricks to double check forward and side stepping – which helped confirm my practice was not totally out of kilter.

I look forward, as part of the TCC Association's celebration near Justin's birth date in November, to the opportunity to refine my movements again.

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CONTINUED FROM P. 20

The studies reported here affirm TCC's efficacy as an evidenced based intervention for a variety of physical and mental conditions. Additional studies are needed to determine its effectiveness as an intervention for lifestyle changes such as smoking cessation, substance abuse prevention, truancy prevention and anger management. Furthermore, we recommend TCC studies with specific populations, such as prison populations, individuals with early onset dementia, adults and youth with epilepsy, and at-risk youth, for example.

### Acknowledgements

The author acknowledges several accredited T'ai Chi Chih instructors for their generous help with preparing this article: Deanna Rasch, Richard Detert, Mary Case, April Leffler, Stephen Thompson, Bruce Eisenmenger, Leya Cragin, and Lisa Otero.

## TCC Retreat ~ Making Friends With Chi March, 2017, Littleton, Colorado

By Marie Dotts, Loveland, Colorado

**I woke up the last day of the T'ai Chi Chih** retreat singing James Taylor's song, "How Sweet It Is (To Be Loved By You)." I am not musically gifted but my heart so overflowed with love energy that it could not help but break into song. Justin Stone shared many times about the transformative effects of the accumulated *Chi*. And that is what we are so powerfully doing at a retreat. We are creating the space for all to be more fully present to our TCC practice, to ourselves and each other. The group energy supports and enables us to sink even deeper into our essence and authentic selves.

This field filled with presence can become so strong that we can palpably feel and taste it. (It is like the taste of sweet honey.) This sweet honey created by the group accumulation of *Chi* is transformative and gives us a **greater capacity to be more present in our lives** when we leave the retreat. I encourage everyone to attend a retreat and taste the honey. How sweet it is.

### ~ From participant Irma Crump ~

I thought I had to work hard and become a martial artist if I wanted the benefits of T'ai Chi. The form I learned was enjoyable with a group but we rarely did it: "That's not the point," I was told. The point was to expend greater effort to attain yet a higher level of skill. "T'ai Chi is a martial art," I was reminded many times; it was a system of self-defense.

The meditative flow, serenity, spiritual nourishment and community I'd hoped for was not in that tradition. A friend introduced me to Marie Dotts. Her beginner class was water in an oasis for me. During this retreat I learned that softness and continuity are the essence of TCC. "T'ai Chi Chih must be done softly with the effort of no effort," Justin Stone wrote. "Tai Chi Chih is not designed for self-defense ... it is an inner discipline that brings to life the dormant Vital Force." We joyously practiced the gentle movements together every day. I began to relax in the nurturing presence of the TCC community that embodied what my heart had been seeking.

**Like the man holding his suitcase on the train who was encouraged to put it down and let the train do the work**, I let go and let *Chi*. With my fellow travelling companions on the TCC journey I began to sense and flow with the great Cosmic Rhythm. How grateful I am to have found a loving home.

### ~ From participant Eliza Fulton ~

This was the first TCC retreat that I attended and what surprised me was the wonderful feeling of community. Moving together was magical and as one participant noted: the TCC circle felt like it was pulsing like one heartbeat as the *Chi* moved within and between us. Lovely. I also appreciated how Pam explained that we have **"working" practices** where we are working toward improving the way we move and cultivating a better understanding of the principles, and that then we have **"flowing" practices** where we just enjoy the movements and settle into the flow. It was a stellar experience that I will treasure for a long time. We truly made friends with the *Chi* and with each other. Thank you Pam and Marie for making it happen.

*Note: See group photo on page 6.*

# New Jersey Shore Retreat

By Sky Young-Wick, Lansing, New York

**Some of us have been gathering for T'ai Chi Chih retreats** at Lonnie Miller's home on the Jersey Shore for years. Lonnie is a friend to many TCC teachers, and these annual retreats, originally created by Antonia in 2002, were for teachers accredited in the northeastern U.S. Hurricane Sandy interrupted this annual gathering in 2012, but Lonnie's home survived and was repaired.

Our gathering in March was a special return for a few, and a wonderful surprise for others. The content was new for all; Antonia and I served as facilitators. The focus was Centering Prayer and other meditations, including TCC as a moving meditation. Antonia defined spirituality as "beyond the ordinary self," such as the experience of TCC doing TCC. To support the spiritual focus, we observed silence from Thursday night until Saturday before dinner. We only spoke during our learning sessions, and we maintained silence at all other times. We did a silent TCC practice each morning.

We are grateful to Antonia for this idea, to Lonnie for the use of her beautiful home, and to Lonnie and Janet for wonderful meals throughout our stay. Our sincere gratitude to Justin for creating TCC, the unifying thread that brought us all together.

On the final morning, we took time to reflect on our experience and gather ideas for future retreats. Participants were asked to provide a word to describe the retreat:

Healing • Joy • Sea, Spirit, Soul • Remembrance • Serenity • Sweet • Higher Self • Soaring • Sacred • Gastronomical • Freedom • Tranquil • Divine • Inspiring • Source • Nurturing

Dorene Krause also read a poem she wrote from 2011:

SOLITUDE...

For a moment...an hour...a day...  
time alone by oneself and with oneself  
to bathe the inner spirit  
with the quiet freedom of solitude,  
a rare but necessary gift.

Time alone  
to become acquainted with your true self,  
to discover centeredness and balance anew.

Time alone for a moment...an hour...a day...  
mindfully aware of the silence within AND the stillness.

The voice of solitude, a soft whispered breath, speaks  
and beckons you to succumb fully to its quiescence.  
Listen to its message of wisdom and accept its gift of strength.

# March Magic In Santa Barbara

By Linda Jones, Bennettsville, South Carolina

**The Mount Calvary Monastery Retreat House** is set in the beautiful hills of Santa Barbara, California, near the center of the city and adjacent to Mission Santa Barbara. A large terrace – perfect for the practice of T'ai Chi Chih – overlooks Mission Canyon. Magic is created here every March when Sandy leads two separate retreats.



What stood out for Suzanne Roady-Ross during the **teacher-only retreat** was the depth of the discussions about the spiritual side of TCC and how we deal with that (or not) in our classes. Lisa Otero offered a unique method for teaching students where and how to place their hands in the "taffies." Sharron Clark noted that her practice is now softer and holds deeper stillness since the retreat. Karen Goran found the quiet power of the practice to be restful and healing. Each person's presence seemed a beautiful gift that contributed to the shared space. Useful teaching tips and stories regarding the evolution of TCC were shared.

The **second retreat included teachers and students** and was a most unusual gathering. Of the nineteen participants, it was the first retreat experience for ten (five of whom had been practicing TCC for less than a year). A special bonding always takes place at retreats, but this bonding was especially deep and lightning fast.

MaryAnne Stroud described the retreat as "luscious." She expanded and improved her practice immensely. Margie Leroux's re-entry into reality after the retreat was going joyfully smooth. Susan Johnson found much joy at the retreat and experienced tremendous energy after leaving Santa Barbara.

The last evening included show and tell with a display of *Joyful Chi* decorative soaps, photography, published TCC medical research, 1982 recordings of Judy Hubbell's soprano voice and traditional Hawaiian music accompanied by ukuleles.



I was fortunate to attend both retreats, which could not have been more different from one another although they were both magical.

*Jersey Shore Event: Front Row (L to R): Linda Jones, Sarah Riley, Lauren Lormel, Dorene Krause, Antonia Cooper. Back Row (L to R): Sky Young-Wick, Tony Risos, Michelle Carlino, Julie Barrier, Janet Oussaty, Alba Cordasco.*

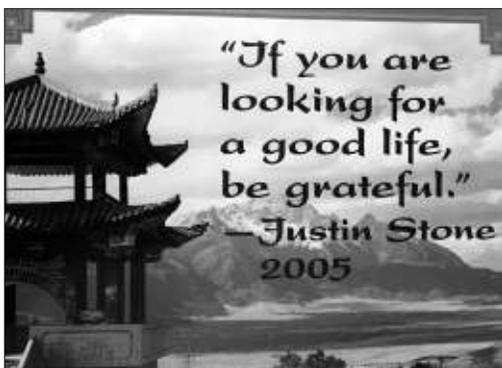
## Cheery, Oh!

By Sheryl Adair, Atlanta, Georgia

**On this chilly winter morning**, I found a spot in my T'ai Chi Chih home studio where the sun was streaming in, sharing its warmth. I had a particularly satisfying TCC practice. As I finished, I noticed the sign that hangs under the window keeping my plants company. It reads, "If you are looking for a good life, be grateful." I copied the sentence from something Justin had written in 2005; I am sure he practiced and said it often. I smiled and thought "Life is good, thank you!"

Next it was time to make myself some breakfast of Cheerios (gluten free), Blueberries (organic) and almond milk. I returned to my sunny spot, sitting cross-legged on the floor. What was so special about these Cheerios? I have them most mornings. They tasted different. I was hyperaware of the blended tastes, textures and temperature. Harmony. I noticed the roundness of the bowl, the spoon, the blueberries and the double circles of the Cheerios. Circularity. And the milk just seemed to flow effortlessly and fill the bowl so evenly after each bite. Balance.

Oh, what a cheery way to begin my day. No surprise if it flows smoothly after such a start. I am grateful. I give thanks. To Justin, to TCC and yes, my Cheerios as well.



– BY SHARON SIRKIS, COLUMBIA, MARYLAND

As I read my college students' assignments, I laughed out loud with this one: "Going into T'ai Chi Chih class, I had no idea what to expect. All I knew was some girl in my English class told me that the professor doesn't wear shoes..."

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I recently received an email from Kim Grant that said she was missing the Lighter Side. She wondered if I had anything funny to submit. Since I originated this column in *The Vital Force* many years ago, not only have I enjoyed writing it, but I somewhat feel a responsibility to keep it going. Here is our exchange:

Kim: "I'm missing my Lighter Side ... anything fun/ny happening over there?"

Sharon: "Argh ... so sorry ... things have been hectic. I'm teaching tomorrow, and I'll have the intention that I get at least one funny one.

I also miss and look for them in *The Vital Force*, but I guess I need to write them before I can read them!"

Kim: "Hopefully inspiration and memory will be jogged. We realistically have until the 9th."

Sharon: (one day later) "Ack ... I'm having a dry spell ... but I have a few more days and another class, so I'm still optimistic."

Kim: "The *Chi* will deliver."

Sharon: "Yeah, but it might be a pizza!" LOL!

Good Karma

Dear T'ai Chi Chih Teachers,

This announcement is to inform you that the online teacher code for ordering and the teacher discount has changed. Email vicberg@comcast.net to receive it. Also, even though this new website looks similar to the old one, you'll need to re-register within the website to purchase materials online. If you don't wish to purchase online, there's an ORDERS phone number at the bottom of the home page where you can order materials by phone. The phone number is 1-800-968-3992. Thanks and call 505-459-4935 if you have any questions.

– VIC BERG, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

Grateful, Then & Now

By Sr. Agnes Fleming, Tarrytown, New York

I can't believe I have been certified since 1992; what a difference T'ai Chi Chih has made. When I returned to New York, I taught many classes for a few years in nearby retreat houses and there was great enthusiasm. After a bout with cancer, I didn't go back to teaching big classes again, but I seldom neglected a daily personal practice. I still work with a small group here at the convent and they find it very

good for slow movement and balance.

Sr. Francis Kay and I always include TCC classes as an important part of the twice-yearly retreats for extended family. It's very encouraging that a few members have made daily practice part of their routine. When I do TCC in my bedroom each morning I am lucky that my window faces east. Even in Winter I am greeted with a beautiful slow dawn, while in Spring and Summer I have the rising sun and the bird song which make TCC deeper and more centered.

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-  youtube.com/tccabq

Community Calendar

For the most up-to-date info and event PDFs, see www.taichichih.org/events

DATE / WHAT & WHERE / CONTACT

- May 5-7 | TCC Teachers Retreat w/ Daniel | Lavelette, NJ | Daniel Pienciak | 732-988-5573
- May 11-14 | TCC Retreat w/ Pam | Prescott, AZ | Dana Diller | 928-848-0824
- May 17-21 | TCC Intensive w/ Sandy | Buffalo, MN | Nancy Werner-Azarski | 612-623-3086
- June 15-18 | TCC Teacher Conference | Boulder, CO | www.taichichih.org/conference-2017/
- Jun 18-20 | Conference Seijaku Basic w/ Daniel | Boulder, CO | Daniel Pienciak | 732-988-5573
- Jun 18-20 | Conference Seijaku Accreditation w/ Pam | Boulder, CO | Daniel Pienciak | 732-988-5573
- Aug 21-25 | Seijaku/Meditation Retreat w/ Daniel | Aston, PA | Daniel Pienciak | 732-988-5573
- Sep 14-18 | TCC Intensive w/ Daniel | Aston, PA | April Leffler | 610-809-7523
- Sep 24-27 | Teacher Symposium w/ Sandy | Aston, PA | April Leffler | 610-809-7523
- Oct 13-15 | Seijaku Accreditation w/ Pam | Rochester, MN | Bonnie Sokolov | 507-529-9515
- Oct 15-21 | TCC Teacher Accreditation w/ Pam | Rochester, MN | Bonnie Sokolov | 507-529-9515
- Nov 16-19 | TCC Intensive w/ Daniel | Albuquerque, NM | Mark Kwasman | 505-358-5371

~ MORE WORKSHOPS & RETREATS ~

Postings here are open to all teachers offering events wholly devoted to TCC.

- Jun 2-4 | TCC Retreat w/Bill Moore | Barnstable, MA | Bruce Childs | 508-246-4855
- Aug 17-20 | TCC Retreat w/ Carmen Brocklehurst | Albuquerque, NM | Judy Hendricks | 505-573-0820
- Oct 18-20 | Prajna Workshop w/ April Leffler | Tupelo, MS | Ron Richardardson | 662-844-6473
- Oct 20-22 | TCC Workshop w/ April Leffler | Tupelo, MS | Ron Richardardson | 662-844-6473
- Nov 10-12 | TCC & Heightened Awareness Retreat w/ April Leffler | Aston, PA | April Leffler | 610-809-7523

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